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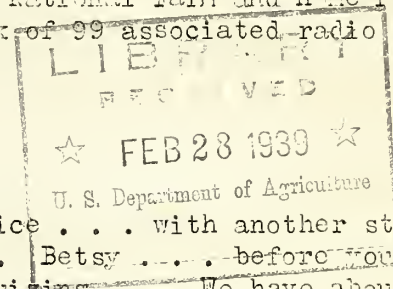


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FOREST ANIMALS IN WINTER CLOTHES

A radio interview between Wallace Kadderly, Chief of the Radio Service, and Elizabeth Pitt of the Forest Service, broadcast Monday, January 23, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Program by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 99 associated radio stations.

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KADDERLY:

Here's Elizabeth Pitt of the Forest Service . . . with another story about the animals found in the National Forests. Betsy . . . before you get into this story, let me do a bit of soliloquizing . . . We have about 170 million acres in National Forests, don't we?

PITT:

That's the figure . . . 170 million acres.

KADDERLY:

And a great many animals can and do live in those Forests.

PITT:

Yes, about 1,700,000 big-game animals and a million eight hundred thousand fur-bearers now live in our National Forests. About 75 percent of ALL the big-game animals in the WESTERN States depend on the National Forests for food in the summer months.

KADDERLY:

And in the administration of the National Forests the wildlife is taken into account.

PITT:

Absolutely. The big-game animals and the fur-bearers are regarded as an important national resource . . . and they are given proper consideration in all plans for acquiring forest land and managing it for the best interests of all the people.

KADDERLY:

When Howard Zahniser told our Farm and Home friends last Friday about the recently completed big-game census, he pointed out how the numbers of certain kinds of big game have increased in the last few years.

PITT:

That certainly is true of the big-game on the National Forests. Our people say that the protection given by Federal and State game authorities has resulted in a gratifying increase in the game population in the National Forests.

KADDERLY:

Fine . . . Betsy, did anybody get after you about that grizzly bear

(over)

story you told us last week . . . about the grizzly bear that went out and rounded up a beaver to cut down a tree. Even for a grizzly bear, that was a pretty big story and I thought some of our listeners might . . .

PITT:

No, Wallace, the mail bag didn't give me a bit of trouble over that grizzly bear story. But it did bring me some letters from people who said they'd like to hear more about the animals that live in the National Forests . . .

KADDERLY:

Good! That gets us up to the point . . . the animals you are going to tell us about today.

PITT:

Well, I think I shall talk about forest animals that change their clothes for protection in winter. Now that's a very interesting nature story and I'd like to mention three or four of the forest creatures who put on beautiful white costumes for winter wear. Nature's object, of course, is to help these animals to live and hunt in the snow without being visible to all the creatures they would prey on, or that would prey on them.

I expect the best-known animal of this type . . . to most people . . . is the snowshoe rabbit, or the snowshoe hare as the scientists call it. If you know your poetry, you will recall the snowshoe hare as Wabasso in Longfellow's *Hiawatha*.

All summer, from the middle of April until the middle of October, the snowshoe hare is brown. Then cold weather comes and the brown coat disappears quickly to be replaced by the soft white fur that completely transforms the appearance of the owner. When the change starts, it begins with the feet, then the ears, then the sides of the nose and the front of the head, and so on . . . and the back turns last. Oddly enough, this order is exactly reversed in the spring when the rabbit puts on his brown suit again for summer.

The white-tailed ptarmigan of the Rocky Mountains is another fascinating example of oblitative coloring in wildlife. The ptarmigan is much sought after by hungry birds and mammals, and is dependent on protective coloration at all seasons of the year. It has a beautiful grass pattern to hide it in summer, a transitional dress in spring and fall that is very clever and effective at making it inconspicuous, and a white costume for its snowcovered haunts in winter. So complete is this winter transformation, that the dark beak and very bright eyes are the only clues to give the bird away. Even on bare alpine spaces, the ptarmigan will still pass for a lump of snow.

Then there's the weazel . . . I wonder how many women know that the ermine that many of us like to well is a common brown weazel in summer.

The color change is very sudden and complete except for the tail-tip which remains the same color in summer and winter. Of course, the American ermine is different from the European ermine which commands a much higher price. However, American ermine has come to be a popular fur and many thousands of skins find their way to market each year to add to the beauty and richness of feminine wearing apparel.

KADDERLY:

Right here, Betsy, I want to ask a question. Does the fur of these animals you've been talking about . . . feathers in the case of the ptarmigan . . . does this actually change?

PITT:

No, Wallace. It's a moulting process. Naturalists used to think the coat itself changed but they know now that it doesn't. It's more than a color change. Nature gives each creature an entirely new coat from the skin out.

KADDERLY:

Well, that's a point I've heard a lot of discussion about and some differences of opinion. I'm glad to have it settled.

And here is another matter to be settled. . . by Bill Crago.

(Chimes)

